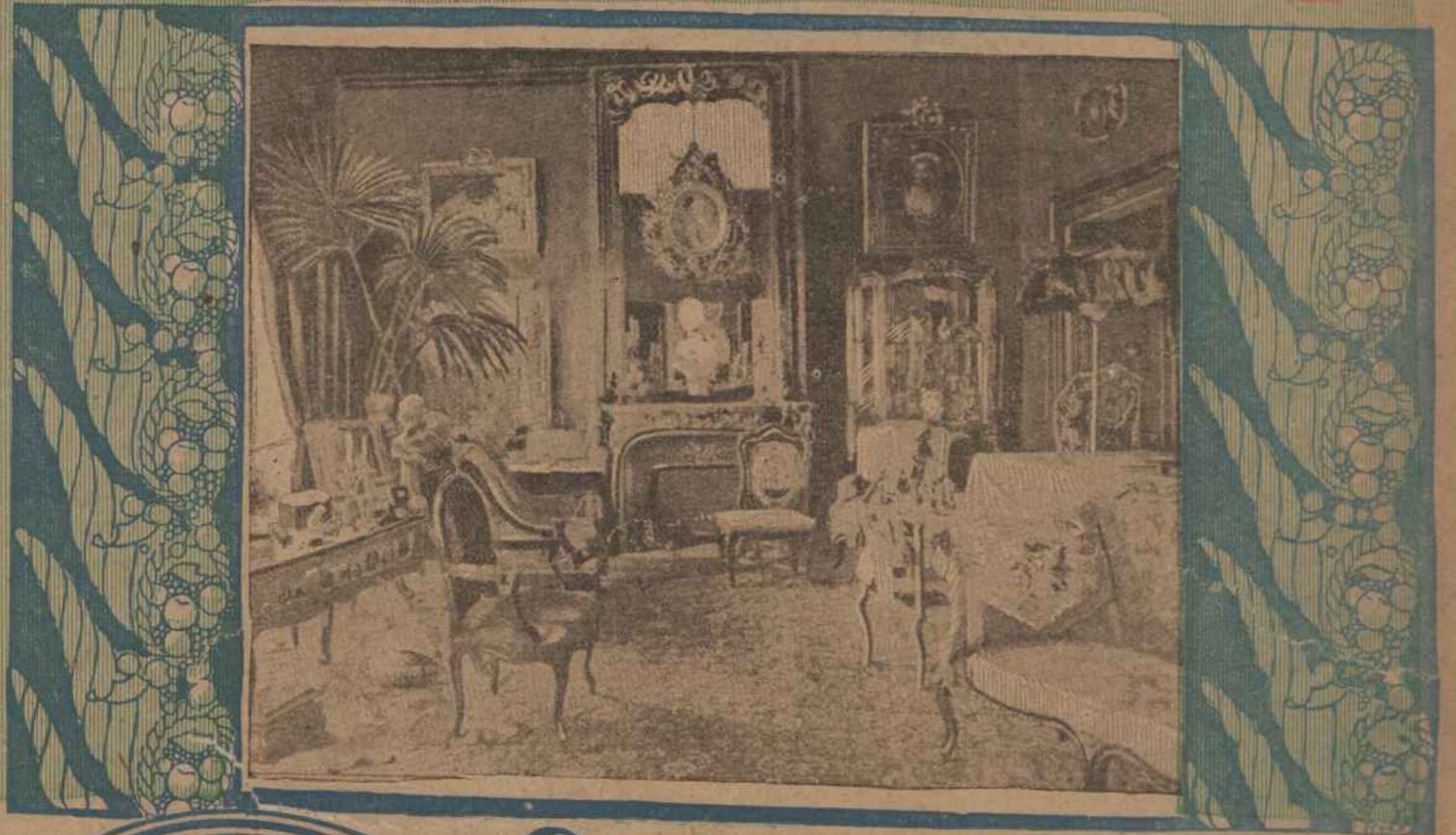


GLORIOUS FULFILLMENT OF A BAREFOOT CHILD'S GOLDEN DREAM



WHERE SHE WAS BORN



HER DRAWING ROOM IN PARIS



COUNTESS DE CASA MIRANDA CHRISTINE NILSSON TODAY

CHRISTINE NILSSON AT 20



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By Edgar Saltus.

I. Way There! for the Lord of Thornerhjelm.

IT was fair day at Gottlösa, a town in Sweden, forty-five years ago. But the fair was ending, it was night now, yet a night bright as a noon in June. Beneath a sky that was pink where it was not blue, through the bare white street of the town, back from the market place to the square, peasants were straggling, patting their fat wallets, fingering their thirsty throats, laughing in their great blond beards.

At a corner of the square a girl was singing. The pink of the sky was repeated in her mouth, its blue in her eyes. At her side was a boy. The gathering marketmen stopped and listened. The girl's voice mounted as mounts a bird and higher, straight to that sky and then fluttered down, gradually, not as a bird, but as a feather. When it alighted the boy held his hat and into it, from the fat wallets, a thin dribble of ore—the copper coin of the country—fell. Some of the peasants separated and passed on. Behind them there were others.

"Way there for the Lord of Thornerhjelm!"

Across the street Nils Andersson, a little man with a long beard and the restless eyes of a ferret, was making place at a table before his inn for the magnate of the county. When, finally, the latter was seated he brought him birch brandy and potted fish.

At the corner opposite the crowd increased. Baron Thornerhjelm smeared a herring on a rusk and devoured it absently, his mind on other things. Then abruptly, as he raised a glass to his lips he put it down untouched. Across the way the girl was tossing a song again to the sky, yet this time her voice was mounting, not like a bird, but like a flock of them. It soared upward and onward and sailed beyond.

"Jenny Lind," shouted the Baron. He was crimson. "Jenny Lind," he repeated.

Christine Nilsson.

the
Great Queen of Opera, Goes Back to Sweden
*And Showers Gold Before the Inn Where She
Used to Sing, Bare Headed and Bare
Footed, for Stray Pennies
45 Years Ago.*

LONDON, Jan. 20.—Christine Nilsson, the great nightingale of Sweden, who for twenty years charmed two worlds with her singing, went back to Snugge, the home of her father, on her fifty-fifth birthday, and invited the whole neighborhood to a grand entertainment. She visited Lof-hult, where her father once worked as a hired man, and gave another entertainment, and at Gottlösa she put up at the inn where forty-five years ago she had sung—a bare-footed child—for pennies from the passersby. Only in 1898 she scattered gold where she picked up pennies in 1853.

The peasants that circled the girl turned and looked at him and then at each other, but very gravely, for who was calling? Who was Jenny Lind? But the girl knew. She flushed, motioned to the boy, crossed the street and courtesied.

"Yes, Mr. Baron."

The Baron looked her up and down. Her frock was ragged. She wore neither hat nor shoes. Yet, though bareheaded and barefooted, she was just that type of radiant maidenhood which the Baltic provides. In the polar blue of her eyes were glints of the aurora. In the tangles of her hair was the crocus of the dawn. It was not these things though the Baron was considering. It was her throat.

"What do you mean by having a voice like that?" he shouted.

From over the way the peasants had followed, wonderingly, but gravely still.

"Who are you?" the Baron continued. "Who is that boy with you? How old are you? What is your name? Why did you come when I called Jenny Lind? Answer me."

From the girl's face the flush now had gone. From the sky, too, the pink had faded. Both were pale.

"Yes, Mr. Baron," she lisped. "I am just thirteen. My father is Olaf Nilsson. At fairs and weddings it is he who plays and I who sing. It is he who taught me. He, too, calls me Jenny Lind. But my name is Stina. Carl is my brother. We live over there, at Wexlo, in the parish of Vederslöfs. We are going back there now."

"You are going to Stockholm with me," the Baron shouted. "You shan't sing at fairs. You shan't sing at weddings. What is more, you don't know how. But you shall know, and when you do, it is not a parish that shall hear you, but the world."

Carl clasped his hands. Stina's face lightened.

"And shall I have fine dresses, Mr. Baron?" she asked. "Shall I have fine furs? And shall I be rich? Can I go wherever I wish to? Once my father said so. Often I dream it. Do dreams come true?"

The Baron laughed. "Rich?" he bawled. "When you come back here, if ever you do, you will be richer than I and more famed than the Queen. Where is it you said you live?"

"At Wexlo, Mr. Baron, but—"

The Baron turned. "Nils," he shouted. "Nils Andersson!"

At his elbow, like a kobold sprung from the ground, the little ferret-eyed innkeeper appeared.

"Call my people. Fetch my horses, and say good-by to this child, for I am taking her to say good-by to her home."

A moment and there were men and there were horses, and at once, as the Baron, the children on either side, took the reins, Nils Andersson waved back the circling peasants and bravely, in imitation perhaps of the Baron's voice, shouted:

"Way there for the Lord of Thornerhjelm!"

II. Such Is Her Ladyship's Pleasure.

THROUGH the white street, back from the market place, peasants were hurrying, fingering their thirsty throats, laughing in their great blond beards. It was fair day. But the fair was over and in the square tables were set. In a kiosk musicians were playing. For all comers there was dancing, for all there were cakes, meats and corn brandy. Before the inn stood Nils Andersson's son explaining to everybody the reason of the festival and adding continuously, by way of comment: "Such is her ladyship's pleasure."

Above, from a window, her ladyship leaned. At sight of her a cap was flung in the air, then another, then a third. Cries followed them. The square rang with vivas. "Hail to our nightingale!" "Christine Nilsson forever!" The leader of the orchestra raised a baton, waved it like mad, and abruptly, without prelude, the musicians attacked the brindisi from the "Traviata," the opera in which she had first appeared.

The air is jubilant when it does not happen to be the reverse. As it reached the diva she bowed, as she had used to bow to parterres of royals, and she smiled, as she had smiled at them, but her eyes were wet. For suddenly she was back again, a slim, barefooted girl, singing ore from the fat wallets of the peasants in that square.

Then, even as the scene returned, it was ousted by another, one which had occurred but six months later, and during which she saw herself in a gala gown at Stockholm singing before the court. That she had always felt was her real debut, for after it she had been taken to the King and kissed by the Queen, and had realized that there are some dreams that do come true. Then that scene faded, and well it might; it was now tolerably remote, happen-

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